115 longs tuh Huger Barrett an Ise one uh duh bes fiel hans on
567 Picayune Plantation."

We interrupted the old woman's reminiscences about
764 plantation days to question her about funeral customs.

[567] "We didn alluz hab too much time fuh big fewnul in dem days cuz deah wuz wuk tuh be done an ef yuh ain do yuh wuk, yuh git whipped. Lots uh time dey jis dig a hole in duh groun an put duh body in it, but wenebuh we kin, we hab a settin-up."

We asked Aunty Jane if they used to provide plenty of food for the mourners.

[178] "Yes'm, dey sho did hab regluh feastes in dem days, but tuhday, at mos settin-ups, yuh dohn git nuttn but coffee an bread.[37b, c] Den dey would cook a regluh meal an dey would kill a chicken in front uh duh doe, wring he neck an cook um [782] fuh duh feas.[35c] Den wen we all finish, we take wut victuals [775] lef an put it in a dish by duh chimley an das fuh duh sperrit tuh hab a las good meal.[53] We cubbuh up duh dish an deah's many a time Ise heah dat sperrit lif um. We ain preach duh suhmon wen we bury um but we waits a wile so's all duh relations kin come."

[777] "Is it bad luck to steal from a grave?" we wanted to know.
[782] "Bad luck?" repeated Aunty Jane. "Sho it bad luck. Dem dishes an bottles wut put on duh grabe is fuh duh sper-
[775] rit an it ain fuh nobody tuh tech um.[54] Das fuh duh sperrit tuh feel at home.[47] Wen he die fah off, we bring um home tuh bury um, dohn leh no strainjuh be bury wid um. Yuh gib people wut ain belong tuh yuh anudduh piece uh groun tuh be bury in.[3] We alluz hab two fewnul fuh duh pusson. We hab duh regluh fewnul wen yuh die. Den once a yeah we
• [769] hab one big preachin fuh ebrybody wut die dat yeah."[43]

Aunty Jane looked up slyly when we asked her if she be-
754 lieved in conjure.

"I ain belieb in um muhsef but deah's plenty wut do. Ise had Ellen Hammond libin wid me. She die las yeah. She sho

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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assumed that the horseshoe was a "professional sign." However, the insignia was instead a charm against supernatural agencies:

> "What is that over your door Elihu?"
> "Dat for witches, Massa."
> "For what?"
> "Witches, Massa. Nebber sleep, no how, widout horseshoe to keep out de witches.[14]

Thus, besides the Christian version of immortality, elements of African tradition also accounted for the Gullahs' attitude toward death, as indeed it did in their attitude about life. As previously stated, existence of spirits of the deceased was not only central to African ontology, but these beings constituted the largest group of religious intermediaries. Hence, Africans viewed death as perhaps the most important rite of passage rather than as the demise of life. Death was a momentous transition, requiring demonstrative evidence that the physical presence of the deceased would be missed. But it was just as necessary to celebrate this passage into the spirit world in a manner that indicated a continued existence. Africans believed that the spirit which survived the body was conscious of all earthly events and had the power to exercise influence over the destiny of the living. Consequently, the death of a clan member was observed with greatest respect and the death commemoration had to be expressed collectively.[15]

Ancestors were said to retain their normal human passions and appetites which had to be gratified in death as they had been in life. Ancestors felt hunger and thirst. They became angry or happy depending on the behavior of their living "children." If neglected, the living dead were vindictive, but propitious if respected. Just as filial loyalty prevents one from allowing a parent to go hungry, "so must food be offered to the ancestors." Among the BaKongo, food was put out immediately after the burial and palm wine poured over the grave. Survivors believed the deceased would eat the food, and bless those who placed it there.[16]

Among the Gullahs, even for one who "died good," the spirit could not rest if something had been left behind which it desired. It was observed that the Gullahs and other African-Americans placed articles on newly formed graves. These objects were usually personal belongings, broken pottery and porcelain, playthings, lighting utensils, objects pertaining to medicine, food, and water. According to the antebellum mem-